

Quirks of ECB Test Notes

By Roland Rollins

Many fans of security engraving appreciate the artistry of test notes. These notes employ the latest anti-counterfeiting devices and are relatively unrestricted in their colorful and often fanciful designs. But not always.

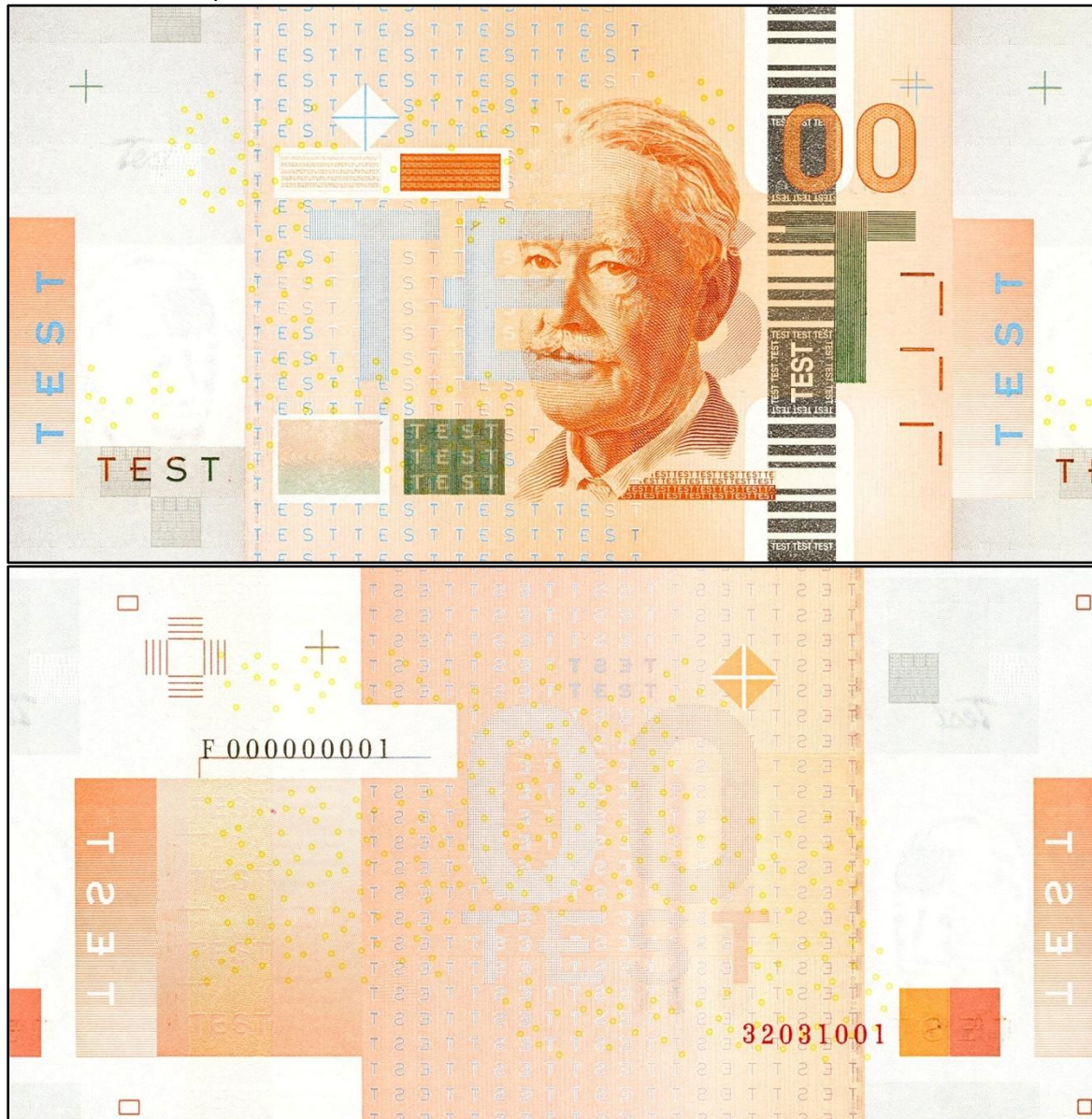
The very first test note I added to my collection featured a portrait of the poet Alexander Pushkin. He is featured on test notes created by numerous security printers, including one for the European Central Bank (ECB). But why put Russia's greatest poet on a test note for the ECB? After all, Russia isn't even part of the European Union.



Answer: The same reason the most common ECB test notes show other people from countries outside the EU – or have no people on them at all. It's called political posturing. No person representing one EU member country could be allowed to be depicted, because then *all* the

other members would object. It's equivalent to the kindergarten rant, "If I can't be on it, nobody can." But still, new Euros needed to be checked for print quality and durability.

Here is the most prolific EU test note, with seven varieties so far.



The portrait shows architect Gunnar Billmann Pedersen from Denmark, one of the most important figures in the history of Danish design. But Denmark is in the EU! Yes, but it is one of seven EU countries which still use their own currency. The binding economic and legal conditions agreed to at the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, aka 'Maastricht criteria' require all EU member states, except Denmark to adopt the euro.

By the way, there were a couple more casualties from all the political infighting during the development of Euro currency:

- Each country insisted on using a local printer for Euro notes. Since printers in several countries couldn't produce the notes with the required specifications, the requirements were lowered until *everyone* could produce them. In time, these printing firms raised their standards so the Euro could be improved.
- Since no person, building, location, or flag colors could be used on the Euro, the end result was the most boring and undesirable series in world banknote history, in my humble opinion. I would not have started collecting banknotes were these the only ones available.

We can look forward to many years of Euros with these same characteristics, as long as the EU remains in place. So far, the world has lost 19 of the 27 EU countries' series of colorful bank notes, with all their rich images and history – with more losses to come as most EU countries adopt the Euro. Here's what you're stuck with to collect...

